



**WATONGA CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
MINUTES FOR NOVEMBER 3, 2020**

*In accordance with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Law, this Agenda was posted October 30, 2020 Prior to 5:00 PM. at the Watonga City Hall, on the door of the City Clerk's office, located at 117 North Weigle, Watonga, Oklahoma.*

**The City Council of the City of Watonga did meet at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, November 3, 2020 in the **Upstairs Classroom** of Watonga City Hall, located at 117 North Weigle, Watonga, Oklahoma for a scheduled meeting. **The Mayor, some City Council Members and others may attend by teleconference.****

**Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance:**

**Council Present:** Julie Almaguer, Kendra Baker, Travis Bradt, Ryan Bruner, Allen Cowan, Lindsey Doyel, Mina Green and Bill Seitter. Also present, Mayor Gary Olsen, City Manger Larry Mitchell, City Attorney Jared Harrison and City Clerk Verlen Bills

**Declaration of a Quorum:** at 6:02 PM

**CONSENT AGENDA**

A. **Approve the Minutes** of the last Council Meeting held October 20, 2020.

Motion to approve the Minutes from the last Council Meeting held October 20, 2020 was made by Allen Cowan and seconded by Ryan Bruner.

Mayor Olsen called for a vote;

J. Almaguer abstained      K. Baker aye      T. Bradt aye      R. Bruner aye  
A. Cowan aye      L. Doyel aye      M. Green aye      B. Sitter aye

Motion carried.

B. **Approve the Minutes** of the Council Meeting held October 6, 2020.

Motion to approve the Minutes from the Council Meeting held October 6, 2020 was made by Bill Seitter and seconded by Allen Cowan.

Mayor Olsen called for a vote;

J. Almaguer aye      K. Baker abstained      T. Bradt aye      R. Bruner abstained  
A. Cowan aye      L. Doyel aye      M. Green aye      B. Sitter aye

Motion carried.

**ACTION AGENDA**

1. **Consideration, Discussion and Action:** To approve an Enterlocal Governmental Cooperation Agreement between the City of Watonga, Oklahoma and Blaine County Sheriff's Office to provide Dispatch Services, 911 Services and OLET/NCIC Services for the City of Watonga.

Mr. Mitchell explained, this is the second part of an agreement with the Blaine County Sheriff's Office, for services. The first agreement was approved by Council in early July. That had to do with City prisoners housed in the county jail, and that agreement was approved by all parties. This agreement covers dispatch services and OLETS. With this agreement we will be paying the county the sum of \$3,664 per month for those services. We think by splitting the agreements with the County, we will end up saving somewhere around \$1,000 a month. Also, by splitting this up, we will be able to track those prisoners in the county jail on a month to month basis where we were not able to do that previously. Other than that change, everything else remains the same.

Mr. Bradt asked, do 911 calls still go to Weatherford?

Mr. Mitchell; 911 calls will still go to Weatherford. This is just for dispatching. We did not change any arrangements. We may need to address that at a later time.

Mr Cowan noted that the agreement is for only 16 hours a day Monday thorough Friday. What about the rest of the time?

Mr. Mitchell answered, the Police Department does there own dispatching for the 8 hours per work day. The 16 hours will cover from five o'clock in the evening, through to the following morning and weekends and holidays.

Motion was made by Allen Cowan and seconded by Travis Bradt to approve an Enterlocal Governmental Cooperation Agreement between the City of Watonga, Oklahoma and Blaine County Sheriff's Office to provide Dispatch Services, 911 Services and OLET/NCIC Services for the City of Watonga.

Mayor Olsen called for a vote;

J. Almaguer aye	K. Baker aye	T. Bradt aye	R. Bruner aye
A. Cowan aye	L. Doyel aye	M. Green aye	B. Sitter aye

Motion carried.

2. **Consideration, Discussion (only):** A Memorandum, dated October 29, 2020, from City Attorney Jared Harrison for Proper Procedure and Timeline for Transition in Form of Government.

City Attorney Jared Harrison allowed that a lot of what we need to do at this time may start to get tiresome, especially after the previous Council Meeting. I will try to keep this as brief as possible. Hopefully everything that I laid out in the memo makes sense. There are a couple of things I want to point out before I take any questions that you might have. On the third page of the memo, there is a layout of numbered paragraphs one through eight. I wanted to make sure I was clear on paragraph one. I consider this to be a somewhat optional step. I think it would be very smart to do this resolution just to make sure everybody understands exactly what process is going to be followed. But, again, I do not think it is necessarily a required step. Steps 2 thru 6 I think, are required by State Statutes. And, I have mixed feelings about number seven. Obviously, if you have the need for a runoff election, there will be a runoff election.

We are trying to come up with an idea as to how we get the government transition to move forward, while at the same time letting that runoff election happen. The suggestion I came up with, after talking to Oklahoma Municipal League (OML), and a few other people, if there was a Council Member still seated for that Ward with term time left, (Expiring 2023), then I would recommend the New Council appoint that Council Member to temporarily fill that vacancy until a runoff election can be held. For example, if there was a runoff in Ward One, whoever was sitting on the Council from Ward One and did not serve for the full term, then this individual would be the one recommended to temporarily fill the vacancy. This way the New Council could appoint someone to fill the board out and keep appropriate representation for all the Wards. As soon as that runoff election happens, then you can seat that elected Council Member. This is optional and only a suggestion, but I thought we needed to show some kind of plan in the event that a runoff is required. There is some flexibility when picking an individual to fill a short term vacancy. I wanted to point out that the last half of that paragraph is optional.

Once there is a full board, then you are off to the races, with our new form of government. I wanted to make sure I was clear that not every single one of those paragraphs is, how it has to be. Instead of trying to read through the whole thing, I will take questions.

Mr. Seitter asked, just Ward One and Ward Two will be for four year terms?

Mr. Harrison explained, on the first election, next year, 2021, Ward Three, Ward Four and the Council Member-at-large will be for only two years. Ward One and Ward Two will be for four year terms. Then, in 2023 Ward Three, Ward Four and Council Member-at-large will be for four year terms, and on going, every Council Seat will be for a four year term.

Mr. Seitter asked, the five Council Members will determine who will be the Mayor?

Mr. Harrison, correct.

Mr. Seitter, is this a annual determination?

Mr. Harrison answered, every time new Members are seated, so it will be every other year. At the first meeting, the Council will appoint their Mayor and Vice Mayor, and that will not change until the election in 2023 or every two years.

Mr. Seitter asked to confirm, the Mayor position could change every two years?

Mr. Harrison answered correct, but there is nothing that limits the Mayor to just two years. The Council could reappoint the same individual every two years for as long as this individual continues to get elected and is able to fulfill that role.

Mr. Cowan asked, What are the obligations of the Mayor and Vice Mayor as the City Manger takes on more responsibilities?

Mr. Harrison; Everybody's role is going to change significantly, from what Council has been dealing with for the last several years. At this time, Council does everything making the major expenditure decisions on a multiple items, and some of this will continue.

With a City Manager, he will make daily decisions and approve expenditures and then report to the Council. The Council basically becomes more advisory board at that point and signing off on all of the actions that have happened throughout the month.

The Mayor still has a similar capacity in that he takes charge and runs the meeting. However, the Council will determine whether or not the Mayor will also vote as a member of the Council. With the current governing form, the Mayor can only vote on an item to break a tie vote. After the change, the Mayor could vote on every item if the Council so chooses.

The Mayor will also continue to be the formal representative for the City at functions and events. The Vice Mayor will fill in that roll in the absence of the Mayor.

Mr. Seitter asked, we have had some discussions about this, but with no clear answer, we will not be voting in the future for the City Treasurer, City Clerk and the Mayor, but what about other positions that we (The Council) vote on?

Mr. Harrison; The City Treasurer, City Clerk, several Officers and Department Supervisors will be nominated by the City Manger and confirmed by Council. Everyone else becomes an employee or an employed position and the City Manager is in charge of the hiring and firing. The City Council will be completely hands off with employee relations with City Employees.

Mr. Seitter asked to confirm, The citizens are no longer voting for those positions. (Mayor, City Clerk and City Treasure)

Mr. Harrison; Correct, the only ballots will be for City Council positions.

Mr. Mitchell, typically, the two positions that the Council will be hiring is the City Manager and in most cases, the Municipal Court Judge. Some Charter Cities have provisions for the Council to appoint or hire the City Clerk, and the City Attorney, depending on the Charter structure. But, this transition does not include consideration of a charter.

Mr. Harrison added, that's a discussion for another day. I would be more than happy to have that discussion at some point in time, but we should get through transition part one, before we go to the next step.

Several agreed that we should not confuse the situation any more than need be.

Mr. Mitchell repeated, so for now, during this transition, the Council will only be concerned with appointing the City Manager and the Municipal Court Judge. There will also be some of the same functions that Council deals with now with respect to approving resolutions ordinances, the annual budget, any major contracts for services. You, the Council will still be approving these activities.

Mr. Harrison; A lot of the items that we take care of in Council Meetings are still going to be on Council Agenda. None of that is going to change. The City Council is still the governing board in the City. To put this into corporate terms, the City Manager is the CEO that runs the day to day operations and the City Council is the Board of Directors that oversees that position to make sure everything is running in a good cohesive manner, but they work through that CEO or City Manager to make sure that happens.

Mr. Harrison; Unless there are a lot of other questions, I will prepare a resolution from my recommendations in this memo for Council to vote on. This way we know as a group that we have a cohesive plan to go forward and take to the public, to state, this is what we're going to do. We talked last month about how time is running short, filing periods are not far off. We can go ahead and get this out to the public so that they will have time decide if they want to run for office, and what position they would run for. With this resolution, everybody is on the same page. We are all going into this with eyes wide open, everyone will know what the plan and procedure will be. I will have this resolution at the next Council Meeting.

### **3. Council Comments;**

Mr. Seitter reported that he appreciated all the work and time from the City Employees, getting the power restored and getting debris picked up after this last ice storm.

Mr. Cowan and several and others agreed.

Mr. Bruner noted that crews from Collinsville OK. were here helping out and we appreciate there assistance.

Mr. Mitchell added that we had some contract electricians working also.

### **4. Mayor Comments;**

The Mayor gave a thanks to all the City Employees for the work they have been doing, especially with recovering from this ice storm, getting power back on and getting debris cleared away.

### **5. City Manager Comments;**

Mr. Mitchell; I want to copy that conversation with an additional thanks to all the employees who pitched in. There were employees that were not necessarily Light and Water. We had Street and Alley crews and Parks Department people all pitching in to help get power restored. They did not really care if that was their job assignment, they just all pitched in and worked together. And we should consider the weather that the Light and Water crews work through, freezing weather, ice on everything, raining, in a bucket truck playing with high voltage. I would not want to be part of that. (And, several agreed with that.)

And they did a tremendous job. We estimate that there were about 1000 customers without power to start with and we got about half of those back on in three to four hours. Most of the other 500 customers were back on within the first day or second day, and then there were approximately a dozen that took a little longer. So, I think they did a tremendous job. Compared to OG&E and Oklahoma City, they still have 150,000 customers without power.

Mr. Bruner asked, will any of this be reimbursable?

Mr. Mitchell replied, we are working with the State FEMA office, we have to compile reports and calculate all of our overtime. We do not get reimbursed for straight time, but we get reimbursed for the overtime hours, plus equipment.

We estimate that we will handle about 2100 tons of tree debris. And we have transferred about 275 cubic yards of branches and limbs from the site on Main Street out to the 80 acres where we can burn it. I think it has worked out very well to bring everything into a central location so we are not having to handle it two or three times. I think the site on Main Street is going to be open for another week or so.

Mr. Bruner asked, will we still be picking up debris curbside after that for those that are not able to haul their own debris?

Mr. Mitchell replied that the City will continue to pick around town for some time.

While all this is happening, we continue to work on the digester. All three departments have been helping out with this also.

Undetermined speaker asked, how is the digester project coming?

Mr. Mitchell responded, we are down to about the bottom four or five feet this morning. We had good weather to work on this until this ice storm hit. But again, we have had great cooperation between all the departments.

The project was something that had not been done for about 12 years. What they discovered was that it is liquid on top, then, down about three or four feet is basically trash and debris. Down further and we get into the sand. Below that is the hard packed deposits. The Fire Department has been helping to bust that up.

Mr. Bradt asked, how do you know when you hit bottom.

Mr. Mitchell thought we would find steel at the bottom, eventually.

Mr. Mitchell continued, one of the first things we need to consider is that the existing grinder, at the front end of the plant is not working. We need to really look at installing a drip chamber, which captures all of that bulk material and trash that floats down the ditches and gets into the manholes.

I have never figured out how you get construction material into a manhole. We had problems in Lawton with 2X4s in the sewer lines. I don't know how that works. At any rate, that is one of the first things we need to address is installing a drip chamber, grinder and maybe a screen, so that we can capture that trash and debris before it gets into the plant.

Mr. Bradt asked, is there one there?

Mr. Mitchell, it is there but does not work.

Mayor Olsen added, it is referred to as the "Muffin Monster"

Mr. Cowan asked if it would be repairable?

Mayor Olsen and Mr. Mitchell answered, not likely.

Mr. Mitchell continued, it might be repairable, but repairs would cost almost the price of a new unit.

Mr. Mitchell; I did hand out a article that I saw in Time Magazine recently about rural hospitals and the problems rural hospitals are having. I thought it was interesting to note, for some of you to see, that we are not the only community having this issue. A lot of rural hospitals are closing and having issues with service, finding staff and being able to finance improvements, because many of these hospitals are wearing out, they are 40 to 50 years old and they're having difficulty finding the revenue they need to make capital improvements in these facilities.

Mr. Seitter asked, because we are operated by a urban hospital, (Mercy) are we still considered a rural hospital?

Mr. Mitchell; I think we are. I can give several examples where rural hospitals made agreements with urban hospital like Mercy or St. Anthony's to help them through transition and this works in the short term, but long term, you still have the same problems.

Mr. Bruner asked about the Police Station not having electricity during the power outage and it has been suggested that the Police Station could be tied to the City Hall Generator.

Mr. Mitchell answered, that option has been discussed, we did buy a small portable generator for the Police Station to keep radios and other items charged and working. We did have tables set up for them to work from in the auditorium for a day or two.

Mr. Bruner asked, was there any time that they were none functional?

Mr. Mitchell replied no, they were operational through the power outage.

Mayor Olsen noted that Light and Water had budgeted for a new generator with their old unit to be used at the Police Station, but this has not happened yet.

Mayor also added, I want to thank the Volunteer Firefighters for helping out the elderly in town to get the tree branches cleaned up in the front yards. Thank you very much.

Mr. Harrison; I have one thing real quick. Later this month we will no longer be under emergency measures for meetings. This will potentially start to go away. For us, we will lose the use of Teleconference for Council Meetings, unless something drastic happens in the next few days. We will revert back to the actual Open Meetings Act. So it's good to see everybody made it today.

City Clerk Bills asked of the Council, Do you prefer to meet in the larger rooms still? Most indicated they prefer the larger meeting rooms for the benefit of “social distancing”.

**6. Adjourn;**

Motion to adjourn was made by Lindsey Doyel and seconded by Ryan Bruner.

Mayor Olsen called for a vote;

J. Almaguer aye      K. Baker aye      T. Bradt aye      R. Bruner aye

A. Cowan aye      L. Doyel aye      M. Green aye      B. Sitter aye

Motion carried at 6:27 PM.

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Mayor Gary Olsen

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City Clerk, Verlen Bills